United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General concludes visit to Japan and flies to Seoul, Republic of Korea; meets with Foreign Minister and later addresses dinner hosted by United Nations Association of Korea and Korean Council on Foreign Affairs.

+ Citing progress made in Georgia peace process, Secretary-General asks Security Council for contingent authority to deploy up to 50 additional Military Observers with UNOMIG, together with civilian support staff.

+ General Assembly yesterday called for urgent new measures to alleviate external debt burden of developing countries; calls for halt to use of unilateral coercive economic measures by some developed countries; proclaims international Decade of the World's Indigenous People; calls for rapid international assistance for Palestinian people.

+ Launching 1994 State of the World's Children report, UNICEF Executive Director James Grant says war on diseases of childhood is being won; United States President says investing in children is most cost-effective way to advance economies and avert conflicts.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali concluded his visit to Japan today with a press conference at the Japan National Press Club. He and his party then departed for Seoul, Republic of Korea. His first meeting in the capital was with Foreign Minister Han Sung Joo. According to a United Nations spokesman, they had a detailed discussion of the situation on the Korean Peninsula, the current state of negotiations, and the Secretary-General's forthcoming trips to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and China.

The Secretary-General then attended a dinner hosted by the United Nations Association of Korea and the Korean Council on Foreign Affairs. He expressed the hope that one day the two Korean States would be represented in the United Nations as one. A permanent peace in the Korean Peninsula remained a key aim of the international community, he said. When that was achieved, he was

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confident that the Security Council would take steps to dissolve the United Nations Command in Korea, which had been in place since 1950.

Tomorrow, the Secretary-General is scheduled to meet with leaders of the National Assembly.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has requested a contingent authority from the Security Council to deploy up to 50 additional Military Observers with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), together with a minimal number of civilian support staff. In a letter to the President of the Council dated 16 December, he said that in his opinion the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 1 December by the parties to the conflict in Georgia manifested encouraging progress towards lasting peace in the area, thus satisfying a requirement outlined by the Council.

The Council on 4 November, in resolution 881 (1993), had decided that the mandate of UNOMIG would not be extended unless the Secretary-General reported substantive progress toward implementing measures aimed at establishing a lasting peace. Mr. Boutros-Ghali said in his letter that UNOMIG, reinforced as he suggested, would be better placed to ascertain the actual conditions on the ground and to plan and prepare for further expansion beyond the 50, should the next round of negotiations, scheduled to begin on 11 January, warrant it.

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The General Assembly yesterday called upon the international community to explore additional urgent measures, including cancellation or reduction, to alleviate the external debt burden of the developing countries. That text, one of 66 proposals taken up at the recommendation of its Second Committee (Economic and Financial), was adopted by a recorded vote of 164 to 1 against (United States).

The Assembly also called upon the international community to adopt measures to eliminate the use by some developed countries of unilateral economic coercive measures against developing countries as a means of forcibly imposing the will of one State on another. The measure was adopted by a vote of 116 in favour to 32 against, with 16 abstentions.

On the recommendation of the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural), the Assembly proclaimed an international Decade of the World's Indigenous People, starting on 10 December 1994. In terms of the draft, the Secretary-General would be requested to establish a Voluntary Fund for the Decade and Governments would be encouraged to establish structures involving indigenous representatives to plan activities for it.

Acting for the first time without a vote on the matter, the Assembly urged States and organizations to extend, as rapidly and as generously as possible, economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people, in order to assist in the development of the West Bank and Gaza. They were asked to

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do so in close cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and through official Palestinian institutions.

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Speaking at the launch in Washington yesterday of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 1994 State of the World's Children report, UNICEF Executive Director James Grant said that the war on the diseases of childhood was being won. According to the report, recent years have seen dramatic progress against many of those problems. Measles deaths among young children have already been brought down from 2.5 million a year to less than 1 million. Deaths of children from diarrhoeal diseases have been cut from well over 4 million a year to less than 3 million. Deaths from neonatal tetanus are down from 9 million to just over half a million.

"There are 3 million children in the world today," Mr. Grant said, "who are running and playing normally who would have been crippled by polio were it not for the advances we have seen in these last few years...Given determined political leadership, I have no doubt at all that we can now turn this momentum into a final offensive against some of the oldest, most widespread and most serious threats to the lives, the health and the normal growth of the world's children."

United States President Bill Clinton, launching the report at a ceremony at the White House, stated that his Administration was committed to improving the lives of children in other countries not out of simple charity, but also out of prudence. "Investing in the children of the world can be the most cost-effective way not only to relieve suffering but also to advance economies, to promote self-sufficiency, to promote democracy and to avert future conflicts," he said.

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